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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Israeli Operation in Lebanon
(7/17-18)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported that President Asad received a message from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad expressing support for Syria in the face of any threat or attack. The

message was conveyed by Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki when President Asad received Mottaki and an accompanying delegation on Monday. Talks during the meeting dealt with the continuing Israeli aggression against Lebanon, regional and international positions on the Israeli war against Lebanon and Palestine, and means of backing the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples. Both sides stressed the necessity of continuing consultations between the two countries regarding outstanding issues.

Papers also reported a statement by Information Minister Mohsen Bilal that "Syria vowed a "harsh and direct" response if it is attacked by Israel. "Any aggression against Syria will have a firm and direct response, not limited in time or means."

Papers also reported that the regional Leadership of the Al-Baath Party reviewed the latest political and military developments in the region in light of the continuing Israeli operation in Lebanon, means that should be taken to confront it, and possible developments, asking the government to outline suitable plans and take procedures to confront all possibilities. The Regional Leadership renewed support for the resistance in confronting the Israeli aggression, stressing the legitimate right of the resistance to use all means to liberate its lands and restore usurped rights.

Papers also reported that the Syrian Ministry of Health on Monday sent a new shipment of aid for the Lebanese people, including 6 tons of emergency medical and nutritional materials. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs said that Syria continued offering its human support to the Lebanese people in the face of the Israeli terrorist offensive against the country, in cooperation with the Lebanese-Syrian Higher Council in solidarity with the Lebanese people. For its part, the Lebanese National News Agency reported that the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs has installed centers at the borders to receive Lebanese refugees and take them to Damascus and offer them needed help.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"A message to President Asad from Iranian President Ahmadinejad: Iran supports Syria in facing any threat or aggression. Iranian FM Motakki: Israeli aggression on Lebanon and Gaza is premeditated" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/19)

"The Regional Command of the Al-Baath Party stresses support for Lebanese resistance, praises positions of the Arab people, and reviews political and military developments in light of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon and means of confronting all possibilities" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/18)

"The Syrian people voices support of the national resistance in angry demonstrations" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/18)

"Haifa is under shelling again. A million Israeli settlers go to shelters. The UN Security Council fails to adopt a resolution. Warnings against a regional war. French Prime Minister calls for humanitarian truce, calls on Israel to exercise self-restraint" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/18)

"Information Minister Bilal: 'Any Israeli aggression against Syria will be met with a firm and direct response with no limits.' The Central Command of the Ba'ath Party Progressive Front hails the steadfastness of the resistance: The Israeli aggression is a model of state terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/17)

"Another day of Israeli massacres in Lebanon before the world community's eyes. Hezbollah SecGen Nasrallah: We are doing well and Israel is heading toward defeat. Hezbollah shells Haifa with missiles. Scores of Israelis killed and injured. Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Berri: 'The UN is a partner in the Marwahin Massacre.' Lebanese Amal Movement joins Hezbollah in the battle against Israel. The enemy uses internationally prohibited weapons" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/17)

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"Syrian aid to the Lebanese people continues. Syrian facilitation for arrivals from Lebanon through al-Arida crossing-point"

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"The Real Objectives of the Aggression"

Muhammad Khair al-Jamali, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (7/17): "Israel is telling a flagrant lie when it says that it has launched its open war on Lebanon, with a systematic methodology that surpasses Nazi methods, to remove the threat of the Lebanese resistance, or to bring back its two captive soldiers who are held by Hezbollah. For what does the bombing of civilians have to do with ensuring the security of Israel? What does this savage devastation of all these vital facilities have to do with bringing back the two captured soldiers? And what does the terrorizing of peaceful residents have to do with bringing back the two soldiers?

"This aggressive madness seeks revenge from Lebanon and its resistance for the defeat they inflicted on Israel and its army when they forced it to withdraw from southern Lebanon six years ago.... Another aim is to eliminate Lebanon as a role model for resistance which has corrected the equation of the conflict in the Arabs' favor and proved for the first time in the history of the conflict that it is possible to achieve liberation through patient, steadfast, and stubborn resistance.

"The third aim is to isolate the resistance by mobilizing the domestic Lebanese front against it and robbing it of popular support, which is the key to its strength, to its steadfastness, and to its ability to achieve a balance of fear and deterrence.

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"The fourth aim is to serve notice to Arabs that the toll of the approach based on resistance to the Zionist-US enterprise in the

region is huge devastation that is similar to the devastation Israel is now causing in Lebanon. The administration of the neoconservatives has been carrying out such devastation in Iraq.

"It is shameful to see some Arabs weakening and caving in to the aggression and its terrorist tools by blaming the resistance for these hostilities, overlooking the fact that the real cause of all this lies in Israel's arrogance, in its expansionist aggressive policy, in its determination to perpetuate its occupation of Arab territories, in its incessant threats against the Arabs, in its attempt to silence each and every resisting voice, and before all else, in the flagrant US bias in favor of Israel, which has been seen by successive Israeli governments as encouragement for aggression against the Arabs, carried out whenever they so wish."

"From Qana to Marwahin"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen commented (7/17): "Any observer of regional developments is bound to call into question the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations and the Security Council....

"Has this international organization, which is supposed to be the guarantor of world security and peace, turned into an umbrella for protecting Israel?

"This question is prompted by the nature of the Israeli aggression and international complicity in this terrorist criminal aggression, which has been pouring its wrath on Lebanese towns, villages, and cities since the Qana massacre of 1996 up to the Marwahin massacre and the massacres being perpetrated in

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End of summary.

Beirut's southern suburbs....

"While the world is talking about the two captive Israeli soldiers, and saying that Israel has the right to defend itself, nobody cares about the rights and sovereignty of the Lebanese.

"In the past few days, having received a warning to leave their village, the residents of Marwahin sought shelter with the UN monitors [UNIFIL personnel]. What was their fate? They were kicked out, and then they met an aerial bombardment that killed them, dispersing body parts and shedding more blood of innocent people. Is it not shameful and disgraceful for the United Nations' role to reach this level of complicity with Israel? And what is the lesson that the Arab nation is supposed to learn from this?"

"Different War and Burning Battleships"

Michel Khayyat, an op-ed writer in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (7/17): "While the surprise of the [1973] October liberation war, which broke the long arm of the Zionist-Israeli enemy and brought down its warplanes by the hundreds, was known as SAM [surface-to-air missiles], which were competently used by the Arab fighters of Syria and Egypt, the new surprise for this arrogant, stubborn, and mentally retarded enemy was the torching of the battleship off the Beirut coast--the battleship that terrorized unarmed civilians, particularly in sisterly Lebanon....

"Israeli battleships poured their lava on southern Lebanon during Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996.... Israeli battleships, sophisticated warplanes, artillery, and surface-to-surface missiles, which Israel has used massively, have failed to achieve any victory unless the criminal invaders, who came to Palestine

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to set up a Zionist entity there, think that their destruction of homes, their torching of farms, the damage they cause to bridges,

and their elimination of innocent civilians is victory.... As a matter of fact this only hastened their abysmal defeat at the hands of the heroic Lebanese resistance in May 2000 thanks to great Syrian support....

"And here is the heroic Lebanese resistance torching the battleship and causing it to sink. The Israelis thought that their battleships and other combat ships were unsinkable. That is why they deployed them off the Lebanese coast as if they were on a picnic. Well, this is no longer the case. Have the Israelis realized that their war with the resistance is no longer a picnic, that their battleships will be set ablaze, that their planes will be shot down, that their soldiers will be captured, and that they and their cities will meet the same fate as has been meted out against Arab homes and cities in Lebanon and Gaza?"

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